

History of Scott County, Iowa. Chapter IX: Blue Grass Township

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 1(6) (Apr. 1864): 253-259

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and poverty, still stands upon the beautiful rise of ground on the east side of the grove, and is used for a school house, while just beside it stands their new and elegant church building, erected the present season. Long may they enjoy the rewards of their early toil they so richly deserve.

CHAPTER IX.

BLUE GRASS TOWNSHIP.

Blue Grass, or "Blue Grass Point," as it was first called by the white settlers, received its name from a point of timberland that extended into the prairie near the Muscatine county line. It was a great camping-place of the Indians in their travels from the trading-post on Rock Island to their hunting grounds upon the Cedar, Iowa and Des Moines rivers. It is a noted fact, that wherever the Indian has been in the habit of camping, *blue grass* was sure to follow. Hence the name of "Blue Grass" was early given to this point from the abundance of that kind of grass found there.

This township or precinct consists of but one regular township of land (township seventy-eight, north range two east), six miles square, but the town or village of Blue Grass is situated directly on the southern boundary of the township, and the settlement of this place belongs as much to Buffalo township as to Blue Grass, when strictly bounded by township lines; but we speak of the *early* and *present* settlement, without regard to lines. The village is located in the south-west corner of the township, on the State Road leading from Davenport to Muscatine, it being ten miles from the former and eighteen miles from the latter place, and about four miles from the Mississippi river. The township is nearly all prairie; but its southern boundary, running along its entire length, near the timber of Buffalo township, has been supplied with ample material for farming and building purposes.

The settlement first began at this point, we believe, in 1836, by a Mr. Sprague, Mr. Sry and perhaps one or two more; but

in 1837, James E. Burnside, James Wilkinson, Samuel and Francis Little, and one or two more, made claims upon the prairie. In 1838, Asa Foster, George and Charles Metteer, Alexander and Horace Dunlap made claims and some improvements. In 1839, Mr. Berringer owned the claims now in possession of Robert Humphrey. The same year, Franklin Easley opened the farm now owned by William McGarvy. Mr. Henry Shutt made a farm east of Picayune Grove, formerly called "Grant's Grove," a small cluster of beautiful oaks, now on the Telegraph Road, where Judge Grant, in 1839, opened a model farm, and raised some of the finest blooded stock in the State.

Among others who settled in and around Blue Grass before 1841, were Peter and Robert Wilson, A. W. Campbell, Robert Burnside, Rufus Catlin, John P. Cooper, John D. Richey, John and Joseph P. Robison, David Gabbert, Daniel Berryman, Morris Baker and sons, George C. Havill, of whom many are still residents there, and among the most enterprising of the inhabitants. These were the pioneers who made the first beginning in and around this beautiful section of country. With what satisfaction and pleasure must these early settlers now look upon this township of land, where the wolf and the deer were the only objects that could be seen a few years ago, all covered over with cultivated farms and dotted with farm houses, many of which are large and beautiful! The progress of the settlement, like others in the county, was slow and discouraging from 1840 until about 1851 or '52.

In the Summer of 1853, when the M. & M. Railroad line was located, the land in this township became valuable, and was sought after with a perfect mania. It was but a year or two before it was almost one solid row of farms from Blue Grass to Walcott, which is located on the railroad in the northwest corner of the township, and is the first station out from Davenport on that road. It is a village of small dimensions, has a church, a hotel, store, &c., and good farms and farming country around it. Among the many beautiful farms that one passes in going from Walcott to Blue Grass, is that of E. Steinhilber. This farm contains a section of land (six hundred and

forty acres), all under good cultivation, with public and private roads running through it. Orchards and gardens planted, with tenant houses scattered through it, while near the centre is the proprietor's large edifice, built of brick, and tastefully adorned. From the observatory of this building, one of the richest scenes is presented that the eye can rest upon. In every direction, the cultivated fields lay spread out before the observer, and in Summer, while the waving grain is ripening for the harvest, nothing can exceed the beauty of the scene.

In addition to the abundance of timber with which this settlement is supplied, there is an immense coal deposit that crops out in many places near Blue Grass. Although the existence of coal was early known, it was never dug to any extent until the settlement of the vast prairie north and northwest of Blue Grass. The average thickness of the vein is thirty inches, where it is worked in the ravines and hillsides. The principal mines now opened are those of James E. Burn-sides, one mile from the village, Joseph Mounts and George C. Havill. In digging that of Mr. Burn-sides, no labor is required by sinking shafts, but simply removing the earth from the top of the bed to the depth of some four feet in a ravine, when the deposit is exposed, and about three hundred bushels per day taken out. This bank was opened in 1855 or '56. Mr. Mounts' coal bank is but a short distance from that of Mr. Burn-sides, and the coal is obtained by *drifting* into a side hill. This bank was opened in 1853 and 1854, and is worked on a smaller scale. About ninety bushels per day are dug. That of Mr. Havill was opened the same year of the latter, and is worked in like manner, yielding one hundred and fifty bushels per day.

But coal may be found in almost any portion of Buffalo township, and at extreme low water has been found cropping out from the bed of the Mississippi, below the town of Buffalo. It is from this latter fact that some have been led to suppose there is a second coal deposit on or near the level of the river, and which underlies the whole, and must be far more extensive and of much better quality than the article now used from

the upland mines. A company is about being formed, we understand, at Blue Grass, for the purpose of testing this principle, by boring or sinking a shaft in the vicinity of Blue Grass until it shall reach the level of the bottom of the Mississippi river, which will require some 150 feet.

The substratum of the upland prairies is composed of a great variety of earthy materials, including marls, beds of coarse sand and gravel, hard-pan or *pudding stones*, overlaid with a kind of yellow clay, and which underlays the present surface soil. This formation indicates the existence of extensive fresh water lakes, with currents, anterior to the drift or boulder era. In excavations for wells in the vicinity of Blue Grass, a rich black mould of vegetable composition has been found twenty feet below the surface. The buried remains of the now extinct tribes of the gigantic mastodon and northern elephant are proofs of the existence of this earlier surface soil, which was covered with a rank vegetation, affording ample sustenance to immense herds of animals now extinct. The remains of one of these animals was found, and partially exhumed, in 1845, near Blue Grass, as will be seen from the following notice, which we clip from the Davenport Gazette of September of that year:

WONDERFUL DISCOVERY—A MASTODON IN IOWA!—The remains of a huge animal have been found in this county about three miles from the Mississippi and about 150 feet above the level of the river, on the farm of Mr. John Perin. The remains were discovered during last month by Joseph Morehead, Esq. They were imbedded in a formation of argillaceous clay, strongly impregnated with iron, and about twelve feet below the surface of the earth. But a small portion of the remains have been exhumed; the remainder, in the situation first discovered, are left for the examination of some skillful anatomist, as the position in which found will tend to the discovery of the size and species of the monster animal. Of the portions unearthed, we will give a short description from the data that have been furnished us, regretting that we have not the facilities for transcribing diagrams of them.

The teeth or tusks of the animal, when first discovered, appeared to be in good preservation, but in removing them they were found to have little tenacity. They are formed of luminated rings from one-eighth to one-quarter of an inch in

thickness, encased in an enamel of one-half an inch in depth. The exact length of these tusks cannot be accurately determined, as previous to their removal the base of one and the extremity of the other had been broken off, but Messrs. Morehead and Sargent, the gentlemen who exhumed them, fully concur in the opinion, founded upon the observations of the impressions made in the clay, and other data, that they could not have been less than *eleven feet* in length. They are eight inches in diameter at base, and very much curved towards the point. Persons who saw them before they were mutilated, say that they were about *fourteen feet* in length. A transverse section of these tusks exhibits the curvilinear radiations seen in the ivory of the elephant.

One of the molars in good preservation was discovered on the same level with the tusks. It is composed of vertical strata of bone and enamel alternating, is twelve inches wide at the base, four inches thick and nine inches deep. Another molar, in an imperfect condition, was obtained; from the size of the portions found, this tooth was presumed to be eighteen inches in length.

Further investigation disclosed a mass of bone five feet in thickness, which appears to have been connected with the alveolar process, from whence proceeded one of the tusks. The surface presented to the eye—for, as we before observed, the remains have been left in the position discovered, with the exception of the tusks and molars, which are in the possession of two of our citizens—as it rests in the clay pit, is a vertical section. A great portion of this mass had been destroyed by people more curious than wise, before precautionary means had been taken to insure its safety.

When first disclosed, the base of one of the tusks was on a level with this mass of bone, but separated to the distance of three and a half feet. In this bone is a clearly defined orifice, supposed to have been the whole of the ear. Proceeding out of this mass of bone, and radiating irregularly from near the same spot, are four bones resembling the ribs of an ox, but are of a substance much more dense. The length of these bones has not been determined, as they are still imbedded in the clay. Attached to this mass by a cartilage—which, owing to the presence of sulphuret of iron, has been converted into a substance resembling bone—is a bone two feet in length, ten inches in width at widest part, and four inches thick in the middle. Connected with this are several smaller bones that have the appearance of having at one time assisted in the for-

mation of the ear. When discovered, the base of one tusk rested upon the middle of the other.

It is the intention of those having charge of these remains to retain them in their present position until such time as competent scientific assistance for their entire exhumation can be obtained.

The original proprietors of the *town* of Blue Grass were John Perin, James W. Reynolds and James E. Burnside, who made the first survey of lots in June, 1853, Samuel Perin surveyor, and made a public sale of them on the 10th of July of that year, Samuel Parker auctioneer. The ground upon which the town was laid out had been occupied by six family residences, one of which had a small store in it, in the Summer of 1852. A small stock of goods has been kept there by different parties to the present time.

In 1855, James E. Burnside erected a building for a hotel, but sold to Mr. Skiles, who made additions and opened a store, which he still continues with success. A Post Office is kept by Mr. Skiles.

In 1855, through the exertions of the people of Blue Grass, who subscribed liberally, a steam flouring mill was erected by Messrs. Brace & Donahue, thirty by forty feet, four stories high, and capable of manufacturing one hundred and twenty barrels of flour per day.

The village of Blue Grass now contains thirty-one families, has one store, two blacksmiths, one carpenter, one shoemaker, one drug store, two church buildings, one Methodist and one Presbyterian. There is a Baptist Church organized, who worship in the Presbyterian Church at present, but contemplate erecting a house next Summer. There are the usual number of School Districts in the township, and well supplied with school houses.

There is much to induce settlers to locate at Blue Grass. A rich surrounding country, well cultivated by enterprising farmers, and schools and churches, well conducted, with the beauty and healthfulness of the location, are sufficient inducements for any to settle down for life. The village needs more mechanics. A tin shop, saddle and harness and other shops of similar utility would do well. The morals of the community

are good. No grog-shops are allowed in this town, and the Sabbath is revered and observed in a suitable manner.

There are some neighborhoods in this township that should claim more special notice, but we shall speak of only one more. The settlement of Little's Grove was first made in 1837, by Wm. Lingo, now of St. Louis, who sold his claim to Francis and Samuel Little. The former died in 1854. Samuel Little, Esq., still resides in the Grove, and we believe is the only old settler still living in or around the Grove. He has made himself not only comfortable with this world's goods, but is independent. Surrounded by a large family, he rests from his toils, and now enjoys the rewards of hard labor amid many privations—one of the best and wealthiest farmers in Scott county.

CHAPTER X.

ALLEN'S GROVE TOWNSHIP.

This township has the Wabesipinicon river on the north for its boundary, being skirted by timber, and also has a large grove of timber cut up into small tracts, and owned by the settlers in the vicinity. The Grove was first settled in 1836, by a Mr. Allen, who erected a cabin and laid claims to the lands now owned by George Lathrop. The Grove derived its name from this man, who removed at an early day into the "New Purchase." In 1843, while exploring the rivers of Iowa, I found Mr. Allen, with his family, on the frontiers, with a newly erected cabin close on to the line of the "Neutral Grounds" of the Winnebago Indians. He was then talking of removing West, as soon as the Indians sold their lands. The original or Indian name of this grove is Ka-te-sau-ne Mo-nok-que (Otter Creek Grove), deriving its name from Allen's Creek, which runs along the north side of the grove and called Ka-te-sau-ne Sepo (Otter Creek).

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